

# NGO DEDRAS Initiatives for the Education of Girls



## *Achievements and Impacts*



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NGO DEDRAS Initiatives for the Education of Girls

# Achievements and Impacts



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## — Abbreviations and Acronyms —

AGIR	: Support for Governance and Relay Initiatives for Quality Education
APE	: Parents of Students Associations
AME	: Mothers of Students Associations
CEP	: Primary School Certificate
COGES	: Management Committee of Educational Establishments
CPS	: Social Advancement Center
CVC	: Daily living skills
DEDRAS	: Organization for Sustainable Development, Strengthening, and Self-promotion of Community Structures
ELIM68	: Elimination of Child Marriage, Child Abuse/Gender-based violence
EPP	: Public primary school
ESS	: Sexual health education
F2S	: Girls Health and Sexuality
GBV	: Gender-based violence
IGA	: Income generating activities
NGO	: Nongovernmental organization
OEV	: Vulnerable child orphans
PAPDEK	: Support Program for the Protection of Children’s Rights – Karimama
STD	: Sexually transmitted diseases
STI	: Sexually transmitted infections
VSLA	: Village Savings and Loan Associations
WASH	: Water Sanitation and Hygiene

## — About DEDRAS —

DEDRAS is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) of development with a humanitarian vocation. Endowed with legal personality and management autonomy having benefited from a framework agreement with the government, it has been, since its creation in 1979, the development instrument serving grassroots communities. With its strong local leadership and confident and open management, it has experienced sustained and controlled growth in recent years. As a major player in the field of social programs, DEDRAS is fully committed to supporting communities for an integral transformation of living conditions and the promotion of a just society, placing people at the heart of its interventions. DEDRAS stands on more than 30 experiences in supporting the economic empowerment of poor and vulnerable communities. The mutual trust between DEDRAS and communities is palpable, strengthening its collaboration for local solutions to systemic problems affecting diverse groups, including children, youth, women, people with disabilities, and smallholder farmers. Together they work in crucial areas such as education and child protection, health, water and nutrition, governance, sustainable agriculture, youth employment, resilience in emergencies, advocacy for policy change, and peacebuilding. As a development organization committed to promoting a more just and inclusive world, DEDRAS strives to strengthen good governance and social cohesion, while emphasizing the participation of vulnerable sectors and stabilization for peace. This holistic approach ensures sustainable results and credible governance, facilitated by its strong relationships with government and local authorities. DEDRAS also stands out as a partner of choice for national, sub-regional, and international development organizations. Its high reputation and experienced staff enable it to design and implement large-scale programs, fostering mutual learning and scaling local solutions for more significant impact.

DEDRAS' working method is based on several essential pillars: system change, grassroots involvement in defining strategies, an entrepreneurial, inclusive, and innovative approach to development, as well as particular attention paid to the most vulnerable, in compliance with the “leave no one behind” principle. In addition, DEDRAS places a strong emphasis on scaling interventions, to ensure maximum

## Our Strategies

*DEDRAS' strategies are developed keeping in mind several key objectives:*

- Strengthen local relevance and ownership of solutions
- Promote innovation and high-impact intervention models
- Strengthen the empowerment and resilience of individuals, organizations, and societies
- Promote social justice

In terms of coverage and impact, DEDRAS has expanded its action considerably between 2018 and 2024. From 34 communes in seven departments, the organization is now present in 77 communes of Benin, with a diverse range of interventions. In the course of 2023, the direct actions of DEDRAS touched the lives of over 1,070,000 people, 60% of whom are girls and women.

## The Fundamental Values and Motivating Forces of DEDRAS

**INTEGRITY** is the essential basis of good administration. Each staff member and every leader of DEDRAS commits themselves to maintaining and reinforcing an irreproachable ethic in their work with a profound respect for the lives of the poor and vulnerable. Honesty, uprightness, fairness, and impartiality are at the heart of this commitment.

**JUSTICE** is an essential value for DEDRAS. Recognizing the dignity of every individual and the importance of international solidarity, this organization is committed to promoting equal human rights and equitable work for all people, especially the most disadvantaged, regardless of sex, race, age, or religious beliefs.

**SACRIFICE** is a key value that defines the commitment and motivation of DEDRAS' staff. Every team member is ready to go where the need is most pressing, braving obstacles and difficult conditions to fulfill the organization's mission to target populations with determination and faith.

**STEWARDSHIP** reflects the gratitude, work ethic, and service at DEDRAS. The management of resources, whether projects or community achievements, is carried out with responsibility, talent, and a spirit of service. Every resource is considered a precious asset to be managed with gratitude, justice, and love while respecting its nature and purpose.

**COMPASSION** guides the action of DEDRAS, reflecting the love and generosity towards the weakest. The organization is inspired by the principles of respect, listening, and collaboration with communities, to ensure that each intervention is marked by compassion and empathy. These values embody the very essence of DEDRAS and guide every aspect of its work, thus ensuring a significant and lasting impact among the most vulnerable populations.

## — Introduction —

In a world where education is the key to sustainable development and empowerment, NGO DEDRAS stands out for its unwavering commitment to education in Benin with particular attention paid to the schooling of girls. For many years, this organization has implemented innovative initiatives to create an inclusive and quality education system capable of overcoming the social, economic, and cultural challenges confronted by young girls. DEDRAS maintains several years of experience in this field through some of its projects and programs.

This document presents some relevant articles on the major achievements of the NGO in the field of girls' education, illustrating how these various initiatives contribute to improving access to education for girls from vulnerable families. The actions of DEDRAS include support from Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) for keeping girls in school, establishing secure birth certificates, removing girls at risk and victims of domestic and economic exploitation, the distribution of school supply kits, sexual health education, the establishment of Child Protection Monitoring Committees, the construction of adapted infrastructure, as well as the organization of government schools and reinforcement sessions in French and mathematics.

The initiatives presented in this document give testimony to the significant impact of DEDRAS on girls' education and its crucial role in promoting equal chances for a better future.



## DEDRAS Revolutionizes Education and the Flourishment of Girls in Atacora



*Reading session between members of the EPP Tigninti/Natitingou excellence club*

The Governance and Bridging Initiatives Support Project for quality education AGIR-Benin implemented by NGO DEDRAS from 2019 to 2023 and supported by Plan International Benin, Action Education, and the Swiss Cooperation, marks a significant step forward in improving education in the communes of Natitingou, Toucountouna, Tanguiéta, Matéri, Cobly, Boukombé, Kouandé, Péhunco, and Kérou. The AGIR-Benin project transforms access to education for children with disabilities and those in emergencies with a particular emphasis on the schooling and development of girls.

### **Impressive results in education**

Thanks to the project's initiatives, the gross enrollment jumped from 89.7% in 2020 to 100.16% in 2022. Additionally, the school dropout rate was drastically reduced from 15% to only 1.75% during the same period. These figures demonstrate the effectiveness of targeted interventions to keep children, particularly girls, in the education system.

### **School performance**

The project also led to a notable improvement in academic performance. The success rate for the Certificate of Primary Studies (CPS) in the Atacora department increased from 64% in 2020 to 68.81% in 2023. AGIR schools performed even better, reaching a success rate of 79.04% in 2022.

## **Modernized equipment and infrastructure**

The AGIR-Benin project provided 34 photovoltaic solar equipment, restored 53 classrooms, and equipped schools with 915 pieces of furniture, improving learning conditions for thousands of students. In addition, 42 gender and handicap-specific latrines and 17 water sources were built or rehabilitated, creating a more hygienic school environment adapted to the needs of girls.



***Construction of two blocks of gender and handicap-specific latrines with three buildings at the EPP Brignamaro/Kérou***

***Reception of a drinking water source at the EPP Ganikperou/Kouandé***



***Renovation of a three-class module by the AGIR-Benin project at the EPP Sayakrou commune of Pehunco***

## Initiatives for girls' flourishing

AGIR-Benin is increasing initiatives to promote the education of girls and guarantee a better future. By distributing sanitary napkin kits to 1,381 girls of menstruating age, the organization significantly reduced the risk of menstruation-related school dropouts. For children with disabilities, 37 tricycles were provided, making access to school easier and more inclusive.



**Acquisition of 37 tricycles for the benefit of disabled children from intervention schools of the AGIR-Benin project**



**Handing over a tricycle bike to a disabled student at the Kouandé EPP center**

In addition, AGIR-Benin supports the school retention of 329 orphans and vulnerable children (OEV), including 247 girls in highly vulnerable situations. These combined efforts show a true determination to offer every child, whatever their situation, the chance to continue their education and build a promising future.

The project also introduced remedial courses, for the benefit of students in difficulty, clubs of excellence, and girl-to-girl tutoring, allowing 73% of students under tutoring to improve their skills in mathematics and French.

### Testimony collected in 2022 : Catherine, CM1 schoolgirl transformed by AGIR-Benin



*“My name is Cathérine MOUGNANGUI, and I am schoolgirl in the first year of middle school at EPP Tikou in the commune of Kouandé. AGIR-Benin changed my life at school, especially thanks to its tutoring program. Before, in third grade, I didn't even know how to write my own name. Thanks to my wonderful tutor, Gariya, I have now mastered the French alphabet. I can break words into syllables and read them correctly.”*

*“Every two weeks, we discover IT tools together, another exciting new thing for me. This project strengthened my knowledge and self-confidence. I am so proud of what I learned. A huge thank you to Swiss Cooperation, Plan International Benin, and DEDRAS for making all this possible. AGIR-Benin has opened a world of possibilities for me and my classmates, I can’t wait to see what the future holds for us thanks to this enriched education.”*

## **Governance and community participation**

DEDRAS through the AGIR-BENIN project has strengthened education governance by setting up school governments and engaging local communities. Education support funds were used to support vulnerable children. Awareness-raising actions on girls’ education and the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) have played a crucial role in this progress.

The AGIR-Benin project demonstrates that targeted and well-coordinated interventions can transform education in rural communities in Benin. By focusing on girls and children with disabilities, the project not only improved enrollment and academic success rates but also fostered a more inclusive and community-supported educational environment. The results obtained are promising and demonstrate the importance of a continued commitment to equitable and quality education.

## DEDRAS' Work Towards the Education of Girls and the Empowerment and Leadership of Women in Atacora Thanks to VSLA



*Savings group  
"Sum dom see" of  
Guilmano in full sharing  
of contribution funds*

One of the key initiatives of the AGIR-Benin project is the support of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), a real driver of reducing the poverty of vulnerable households and stimulating the education sector in the communes of Atacora. Due to gender inequality that impedes women's access to resources and their rights, DEDRAS has set up 90 VSLA in targeted localities to support households with low purchasing power.

These VSLA, directed by women, offer the members a breath of fresh air. They help each other to save income, receive loans, provide for their daily needs, and become entrepreneurs.

Pinagui Kassa, president of the VSLA Titédissou of Tansanhoun in the commune of Matéri, testified, "The AGIR-Benin project has rendered enormous service to our community. We, the women, were able to organize ourselves through the Titédissou savings group. This initiative opened the door to empowerment for us."

Thanks to these initiatives, they can finance school fees and cover small household expenses, considerably relieving the heads of families.

"The savings collected allow us to carry out income-generating activities to meet the expenses of children, especially girls, for the resumption of classes, and to help our spouses with family expenses," said Pinagui, "Thanks to this assistance, we have

gained some leadership in our homes and community. We also have a say in school management, helping reduce the rate of absences and girls dropping out.”

Since the start of the project, the 90 groups mobilized 159,871,250 CFA as savings. Jacob Kaucley, a member of the School Establishments Committee (COGES) of the EPP Ouyanou in Cobly, adds:

“The members of VSLA participate in school management by making home visits to school children at risk of dropping out. This initiative has reduced the dropout rate. Thanks to this project, my wife could help me pay our children’s school fees and some medical expenses. The savings made by my wife allowed our children to resume classes from the first day of school. Additionally, these women’s groups’ home visits have resulted in the recovery of three children from our school, two girls and one boy, over the past year.”

The VSLA put in place by DEDRAS through the AGIR-Benin project plays a crucial role in promoting girls’ education and the empowerment of women. By enabling women to actively participate in school decision-making and management through the Education Fund, the VSLA strengthen their empowerment and self-esteem. Their involvement in the fight against GBV creates a safer and more supportive environment for girls’ education. Thanks to these initiatives, women become the pillars of change, supporting and defending the right to education for every girl, thereby assuring a more equitable and prosperous future for all. With the benefits of VSLA for grassroots communities, DEDRAS has extended this approach to most of its projects and intends to generalize it for all its development projects and programs in Benin.



***Village Association of Epargne and Credit Horoma of Ganiképrou  
in a contribution fund sharing meeting***

# Hundreds of Beninese Girls Transformed by DEDRAS' Educational Sponsorship



*Some children sponsored by DEDRAS of the Evangelical School Complex receiving school kits*

DEDRAS, dedicated to the promotion of education in Benin, set up the Education-Sponsorship project with the financial support of Woord en Daad to create an equitable, inclusive, and quality education system.

## **Strengthening the institutional framework**

The Education-Scholarship project is structured around four main axes. First, collaboration between state actors, civil society, and the private sector has made it possible to put in place structures guaranteeing the protection and education of children. Next, successful advocacy has led to the establishment of infrastructure adapted to the specific needs of children, particularly girls. Thirdly, teachers benefit from continuing training and coaching, improving the quality of teaching. Finally, schools are equipped with educational materials, WASH (water sanitation and hygiene), and home study groups to support the academic performance of many students, the majority of whom are girls.

## **Community support and child empowerment**

Children's clubs and second chance schools provide a space for supporting children in difficulty. The community, the families, and the private institutions are actively involved in promoting a protective environment and supporting access to a quality

education. Vulnerable children receive support for their education and are trained to become committed and resourceful individuals capable of defending their rights. Thanks to the sponsorships, 987 girls were able to access a quality education, receiving school kits, clothes, and food aid. In addition, 19 disabled girls were integrated into specialized schools, ensuring an inclusive education. The community observed a low dropout rate thanks to rigorous monitoring of student performance by parents, through Parents of Students Associations (APE) and Mothers of Students Associations (AME).



The project also promotes the involvement of children in entrepreneurship with 172 girls engaged in income-generating activities. DEDRAS' actions include eco-citizenship education initiatives, reforestation campaigns, and the promotion of responsible behavior in the face of climate change.

The success of these initiatives relies on close collaboration with various partners, including relevant ministries, local institutions, and civil society organizations. Together, they work to create an environment favorable to girls' education, thereby contributing to the development of enterprising and resilient human capital.

The testimony of Malika, a sponsored young girl, illustrates the impacts of these actions: “Thanks to the support of DEDRAS, I was able to continue my studies despite my family’s financial difficulties. Today, I dream of being a teacher to help other girls realize their dreams.”



## Challenges and perspectives

Despite the progress made, several challenges remain, including cultural and social barriers, economic pressures, and precarious security conditions in certain regions. Family mobility and limited access to technology are also obstacles to overcome. Nevertheless, DEDRAS remains determined to continue its efforts with an annual plan for 2024 emphasizing technical and professional training, entrepreneurship, and the use of TIC in education.

In short, the Education-Sponsorship project of DEDRAS is a beacon of hope for many girls in Benin, providing them not only with quality education but also with the tools needed to become empowered and influential women in their community. Through its commitment and innovative initiatives, DEDRAS is transforming the future of these young girls, contributing to a more equitable and promising future for Benin.

## Monitoring Committees as Guardians of Childhood in Benin and Monitoring the Schooling of Girls



*Members of a village monitoring committee in Karimama meet to discuss issues related to children's rights*

In Benin, the protection of children remains a top priority, facing persistent challenges such as early marriage, economic exploitation, and other forms of violence, especially among girls. For many years, DEDRAS has firmly committed to the protection of children in Benin through its innovative initiatives and community monitoring committees. These monitoring committees prove to be the essential pillars in the protection and education of children. In partnership with local communities, these committees have become agents of change, detecting and responding to child rights violations with determination and effectiveness.

Unlike centralized approaches, DEDRAS made the bold choice to rely on the potential of local communities to protect children. Monitoring committees, established as pilot projects such as the Support Program for the Protection of Children's Rights of Karimama, have demonstrated their effectiveness by mobilizing mothers and community leaders.

The monitoring committees are composed of influential community members like local elected officials, religious leaders, representatives of women's associations, and youth.

Their principal mission is threefold: identify cases of violation of a child's rights, refer victims to the appropriate support structures, and conduct awareness-raising actions within the community.

## **Expansion of the monitoring committees**

DEDRAS tirelessly expands its child protection network across Benin. Today, 577 monitoring committees watch over the well-being of the youngest population in every corner of the country. 325 village monitoring committees and 252 school committees cover the Alibori and Borgou departments, where violations of children's rights are most glaring. This is an unprecedented territorial network that is bearing fruit. In Kandi alone, 82 local monitoring committees supported by the Cash+Care project stand as bulwarks against abuse, and this is just one example among many. As part of the project Elimination of Child Marriage, Violence Against Children/Gender-Based Violence ELIM68, no less than 152 committees were created in the communes of Nikki, Gogounou, Malanville, Karimama and Ségbana.

A local presence makes all the difference. Where the State struggles to protect the most vulnerable, the local and school monitoring committees monitor, warn, and act. An everyday sentinel who is as close as possible to the realities on the ground.

## **Impacts of the monitoring committees**

Between 2020 and 2023, the monitoring committees identified and referred to specialized structures no less than 1,992 cases of children in vulnerable situations. This figure testifies to their ability to break the silence surrounding such situations and to offer immediate and lasting assistance to victims. Hundreds of these cases involved girls at risk of dropping out of school, particularly because of early marriage and economic exploitation. The awareness-raising actions carried out by the committees played a crucial role in early intervention to prevent these dropouts, while also promoting a safer and more inclusive school environment for all students.

School monitoring committees have also been instrumental in protecting girls in educational settings. Their efforts contributed to a significant increase in the gross enrollment rate of girls in Karimama going from 44.26% to 52.03% between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 under the impetus of the PAPDEK project. This success illustrates not only the effectiveness of the committees in the fight against dropping out early and GBV but also their capacity to positively transform the lives of children and young girls in the most vulnerable communities in Benin.

## **Successes and challenges: stories of community engagement**

Behind every statistic, there are moving life stories. Poignant testimonies of victims who dare to break the silence and find the strength to rebuild themselves. Like this young schoolgirl, who was abused by two teachers and became pregnant. Thanks to the courageous intervention of the local monitoring committee, her case was taken to court. A risk taken which allowed the arrest of the alleged culprits, helping to secure the school environment for the girls.

Elsewhere, a teenage girl successfully escaped a forced marriage at the last minute. Alerted by rumors, committee members carried out a discreet investigation and were able to alert the authorities in time to prevent this union. We can also mention the case of the Fouet primary school in the commune of Kandi, where only 50% of enrolled students completed the school year. Early marriages, farm work, and many hardships deprive children, especially girls, of their right to education. Thanks to the mobilization of monitoring committees and adolescent clubs, the drop-out rate fell to less than 10% by 2023-2024. Another example is the village of Alfakoara. There the demand for primary school enrollment exploded, leading to the opening of a second class, a success made possible by the unwavering commitment of the local monitoring committee.

So many stories illustrate the concrete impact of the community approach when populations take ownership of the cause for child protection. Despite these successes, challenges persist, such as the persistence of certain harmful practices and the lack of resources. DEDRAS continues to strengthen its initiatives to consolidate monitoring committees and ensure their sustainability.

## Sustainability and future perspectives

To perpetuate this model, DEDRAS recommends increased support from authorities and development partners. Ongoing training, additional resources, and constant advocacy are essential to strengthen the capacity of committees to protect children and promote their rights.

The monitoring committees represent an exemplary model of community engagement for the protection of children in Benin. Through their vigilant and determined action, these committees not only respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable children but also shape a future where every child can grow up safely and access quality education.

Furthermore, the monitoring committees in Benin do not just protect children, they represent hope, a local and effective response to the complex challenges faced by vulnerable children. By supporting these local initiatives, DEDRAS continues its long-term commitment to a future where all children can grow up safely and fully benefit from their fundamental rights.



*Trained by DEDRAS as a peer educator, a student member of the school club raises awareness to her classmates about child marriage and child rights violations.*



*The members of the school club, supervised by some officials from DEDRAS and Unicef, are mobilizing to say NO to child marriage*

# When Sexual Health Keeps Girls in School



*Family photo of the girls and some members of the F2S project team*

Since 2022, DEDRAS has implemented the project “Girls Health and Sexuality” (F2S), financed by our Swedish partner ERIKS, in the Alibori department. This project transforms young girls’ lives by touching the 395 villages of the six communes of this department.

The F2S project allows young girls to stay in school, eliminating a major obstacle to their education and dignity. By educating the 786 girls on menstrual hygiene and training 64 teachers who now include sexual health education (ESS) in their classes, the students receive accurate and appropriate information. In addition, 2,344 children, 1,584 of whom are girls, are supervised by 82 mentors who develop self-protection strategies and help them better understand their rights.

F2S initiatives also include 1,580 behavioral change communication sessions and educational talks in schools and communities. These sessions address children’s rights, sexual and reproductive health, and violence prevention. 236 cases of GBV reported and monitored by protection services show increased awareness and better protection of victims. The training of 633 religious leaders plays a key role in community dialogues on topics such as sexuality, STI/STD sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancy, and school perception. This positively influences social norms and reduces school dropouts.

24 radio programs addressing topics such as women's leadership, the importance of education, and the struggle against GBV, reach a wide audience, raising awareness and educating communities in Alibori. The advancement of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and income-generating activities (IGA) reduce the economic vulnerability of households, allowing families to better support the education and health of their daughters.

The testimonies of the recipients reveal the transformative impact of F2S. Children now dare to report abuse, leading to better protection and justice for victims. Girls stay in school thanks to raising awareness about menstrual hygiene and financial support that eliminates a major obstacle to their education. Networks of girl leaders actively influence their rights, including the right to education, creating a generation made of ambassadors of change.

Planned to end in 2024, the F2S project represents a collective movement involving local communities and educational and health institutions. Through this project, DEDRAS draws a new path for the girls and women of Alibori, where health, education, and rights are at the heart of their development.



*Adolescent girls trained on common life skills CVC*

## DEDRAS Invests in the Future of Girls for Facilitating Access to Birth Certificates that Help Girls Stay in School



*Some children of the primary school of Koudengou/Natitingou with their secure birth certificates received from DEDRAS*

In a world where access to fundamental rights is crucial, every child deserves to build their future on solid foundations. In Benin, this opportunity is often compromised from birth by the absence of an essential document: the birth certificate. Fortunately, DEDRAS, in collaboration with its partners Woord en Daad and the AFAS Foundation, is gradually changing this situation. Thanks to their ambitious project “Breaking the chains of child labor and domestic exploitation in Benin and Burkina Faso,” many children are seeing their future unlocked.

### **Secure Birth Certificates: A New Chance for Children**

Dota Doko, a student in middle class 1 at Koudengou public primary school in the commune of Natitingou, is one of the 728 children who received their secure birth certificates. Among them, 389 are girls, for whom this document represents much more than a simple administrative formality. Without this act, Dota and many others would not have been able to pass the crucial Primary School Certificate (CEP) exam next year, a significant barrier for so many vulnerable children, especially girls.

DEDRAS, through the project “Breaking the chains of child labor and domestic exploitation in Benin and Burkina Faso,” is raising awareness among the population about the importance of birth certificates. From April to December 2023, this project



made it possible to establish 728 secure birth certificates for vulnerable children in nine communes in the Atacora department, as well as in the towns of Parakou and Tchaourou in the Borgou department. “I’m very happy, the teachers asked my parents



*Students in the first year of the middle course of the Koudengou EPP happy with their birth certificates in hand*



*Dota Doko receiving her birth certificate from the director of the EPP public primary school in Koudengou*

for my birth certificate all the time, but it was very damaged and a headache for them. Today, I have my birth certificate in my possession and I am really happy, as are my parents because I will be able to take the exam next year without a problem,” says Dota Doko with joy.

### **Testimony of Iro Nektopa : An escape from exploitation**



DEDRAS does not limit itself to providing birth certificates. It also supports the training of vulnerable girls to prevent domestic exploitation. Iro Nektopa, originally from the Perma region, shares her gripping story of how she and other young girls escaped exploitation thanks to DEDRAS’ intervention. After dropping out of school in sixth grade due to financial constraints, Iro was one of 77 girls sent to a learning center

by DEDRAS. Iro and her friends, confronted with the harsh reality of looking for work, sought help from their local pastor. He contacted a DEDRAS facilitator specializing in child protection. Thanks to this intervention, they were directed to the Social Promotion Center (CPS) in Natitingou, where they were welcomed and received sound advice. Iro and her friends chose to learn sewing in Perma, their home village, with all the learning costs covered by DEDRAS, including complete kits for optimal learning. “It is difficult to find the words to express our gratitude to DEDRAS and its technical and financial partners. They have truly transformed our lives by providing us with a learning opportunity and protecting us from exploitation,” says Iro Nektopa, moved. In total, 105 children at risk and victims of domestic exploitation were supported in their life projects. 83 children, including

77 girls, were removed from domestic work and directed to sewing and hairdressing learning centers thanks to DEDRAS' initiative. Additionally, 22 children, of whom are 14 girls, were accompanied back to school, with support covering learning costs and the necessary kits.

These actions will continue until 2027, to reach as many vulnerable children as possible, particularly girls. DEDRAS and its partners are committed to continuing to fight so that every child in Benin enjoys their fundamental rights, including the right



***Girl victims of exploitation put in sewing apprenticeships in the Koussoukouingou commune of Boukoubé***



***Girls at risk and victims of exploitation learning to sew in Perma commune of Natitingou with their boss, the protection advisor of DEDRAS, and the pastor***

## Conclusion

The achievements described in this document are only a glimpse of the deep commitment and efforts made by DEDRAS to transform girls' lives in Benin. By creating innovative and sustainable solutions, DEDRAS continues to overcome the many social, economic, and cultural challenges that hinder girls' access to education. The actions undertaken, ranging from economic support by VSLAs to sexual health education through the distribution of school supplies and the creation of appropriate educational structures, demonstrate the positive and tangible impact of these initiatives.

However, the road to equitable and inclusive education is still long and fraught with obstacles. DEDRAS needs the support and collaboration of stakeholders, partners, and donors to strengthen its efforts and reach even more vulnerable girls. Your support can make all the difference. Together, we can ensure that every girl has the opportunity to learn, grow, and become an agent of change in her community. Join us in this crucial mission to build a future where equal opportunities in education are no longer a dream, but a reality for all girls in Benin.

### Projects in the works:

1. Support for girls' education outside the school system (both those who have never attended school and dropped out)
2. Keeping girls from vulnerable households in school
3. Support for girls' education in emergencies and girls' retention in schools in conflict zones.
4. Developing life skills and improving the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls in Benin
5. School-employment transition, economic empowerment and leadership for adolescent girls in Benin
6. Support for the establishment of a platform for observing girls' schooling and continuous learning

## *Some partners*





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**“For a better world, let’s invest  
in girl’s education”**

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